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Abstract

This three-month project utilized commercially prepared programed materials in French, German, and Spanish instructicn for eighth graders selected for high language aptitude and above average ability. Interviews with participating students made after the completion of the project are the basis of the project evaluation which includes reccmmendations. Project participants, facilities, arrangements, supervision, programs, purpose, objectives, and significant findings are described and evaluated. A letter to parents explaining the project and results of an attitude questionnaire administered to participants are also included. (RL)

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EVALUATION OF A PROJECT:

INDEPENDENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY BY SELECTED EIGHTH GRADERS AT TOWNSEND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL USING PROGRAMMED MATERIALS, MARCH 3 TO MAY 23, 1969

by
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August 1969

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SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Participants

For a period of three months sixteen eighth graders, selected by language aptitude test scores and the recommendation of Mr. Clarence I. Logan, Principal, studied French, German, and Spanish using commercially prepared programmed materials. A seventeenth student, beginning in the middle of April, studied for a period of six weeks.

Facilities, Arrangements, Space

The students, working either as individuals or as pairs, at their discretion, assumed full responsibility for the use of taperecorders, programmed textbooks, and correlated tapes during designated periods each day of the project. The time for independent foreign language study was created by dispensing students from their reading classes. Several students voluntarily requested schedule changes to permit working alone rather than as a member of a pair. (Twelve of the students had been members of a seventh-period reading class and pairing was required because of the limited number of taperecorders.)

Since Townsend did not own sufficient taperecorders to implement this project, two were borrowed from Tucson High School, one from Rincon, and two from Wakefield. A total of eight recorders were at the disposal of the students.

Space for independent study was provided in the cafeteria, the library, a counseling office, a classroom, and, in emergency, the bookroom and the assistant principal's office.

Supervision

Working with the principal, Mr. Clarence I. Logan, the Coordinator of Foreign Language Instruction for Tucson Public Schools, John F. Bockman, organized and coordinated the project.

A letter, carefully detailing the objectives and the conditions of independent programmed study was sent to parents, and was signed and agreed to by all participating students and their parents. (See Appendix A)

Each student was given careful, personal orientation in the use of the taperecorder and programmed materials. The coordinator observed and assisted with the use of the materials during the first week of the project. Thereafter, he visited each student briefly on an average of once every ten days. If the student had a question, or needed assistance in the proper use of the program or the taperecorder, assistance was given at the earliest opportunity.

Students checked the taperecorders out and in each day. Otherwise, no formal record was kept of the students' daily use of materials or space.

Programs

Ten students worked with A Programmed Course in Introductory Spanish, by M. W. Sullivan. The course consists of seven volumes of programmed material and seven correlated tapes.

Three students used German A, by Ernest E. Ellert. The course consists of five textbooks and twelve tapes.

One student studied from Modern French A, by Elaine Burroughs. The course consists of two textbooks and eight tapes.

Three students used Active French Foundation Course, Book 1, by Fernand Marty. The course consists of one book and thirteen tapes.

In addition to programs purchased by the district, programs in each of the three languages were borrowed from Mr. J. O. "Rocky" Maynes, the Arizona State Foreign Language Supervisor.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The design of the project was to permit interested and persevering students to develop a limited but thorough background of certain skills in the language chosen while working at their own pace and without the usual pressures associated with classroom study. There was to be no formal evaluation of their daily work and no strict accountability. The project was not intended to substitute for any part of a regular year's work in a foreign language. A more complete statement of the purpose and objectives as they affected students may be found in the original proposal, which forms Appendix A of this report.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The project was to test the feasibility of independent study using programmed materials as a mode of instruction for a limited number of students of high language aptitude and above-average general ability. The specific question to be answered was this: Will independent use of foreign language programmed materials be sufficiently motivating to students of high language aptitude, high ability, and proved academic success that they will continue to work alone and conscientiously over a reasonably long period of time to achieve the objectives of the language programs. Can this opportunity be provided economically, and without causing serious dislocations in the normal operations of a school and its personnel?

FINDINGS

1. There were no disciplinary problems associated with this project.

2. The project was relatively simple to initiate and maintain. Participants mastered the techniques of using programs and tapes very quickly. There was no damage to equipment, programs, or tapes.

3. No mutual interference or disciplinary problems were met by having as many as four individuals or pairs working simultaneously on separate programs in

different languages in four corners of the cafeteria.

4. Once the student had made a good start in the program, it did not seem to make a difference to work habits how often or how rarely the coordinator visited the individual or pair.

5. The participants seemed to accept the limitations which this mode of instruction imposes on the objectives to be achieved. Confidence in the materials appeared constant throughout the project and was very high at the end of the project.

6. Participants seemed happier if they were working in proximity to other people, e.g. in the cafeteria or the library, but not necessarily with other people, than if they were working in physical isolation, e.g. alone in the counseling office.

7. Questions and requests for assistance were very minimal. Problems tended to be self-resolving.

8. Motivation appeared consistently high throughout the project. The process seemed to be both challenging and motivating to the great majority of participants.

9. Boredom did not seem to be a serious problem at any time during the project. (See Questionnaire, Appendix B.)

10. Students who were native or near-native speakers of Spanish appeared to find the program just as motivating as did non-natives. (See references in Interviews, Appendix C, p. 46)

11. Students appeared to prefer to work partly alone and partly as a member of a team, although they tended not to want to be held back by a partner. (See Questionnaire, Appendix B.)

12. Participants believed the program would have been enhanced if a native speaker (teacher or non-teacher) could have interacted with them in the language about once a week on a planned basis.

13. Participants appeared convinced that they had learned a great deal from their programs. (This was not, and perhaps could not have been, verified through testing.)

14. Given the MLA Coop Proficiency Tests in their respective languages, thirteen of the participants who took both the listening and the reading tests achieved a pre-test mean score of 14 in both listening and reading. In a post-test using the same instruments, they achieved a mean score of 14.9 in listening and 14.7 in reading. The difference is obviously insignificant, but it may be assumed that the duration of the project was too short to yield evidence of significant change. (Mrs. Barbara Riley)

15. Actual cost to Tucson Public Schools of commercially prepared programmed materials used in the project was:

1 Complete Course, Introductory Spanish.....	79.75
3 Sets of Textbooks to Accompany Above.....	42.00
1 Complete Course, German A.....	136.96
1 Complete Course, French A.....	96.22
1 Complete Course, Active French Foundation Course.....	54.90
Total	409.83

16. In addition to the above costs, sixty magnetic tapes were purchased for use in the project at a cost of $117.60. This makes a grand total of $527.43 as the cost of the materials for project. All of the above materials are, of course, reusable. The project could be replicated this year and in succeeding years with little or no additional cost.

EVALUATION

1. The project seems to suggest that students of the caliber chosen for this experiment can and will make proper use of programmed materials in independent study, that they will sustain their effort, and that they will be satisfied with the results achieved.

2. Nothing in the experiment suggested that motivation will tend to wane so long as sequential programmed materials of the type employed remain to be completed.

3. The experiment suggests that despite some minor criticisms of the programs, the students tend to find the process of programmed learning a challenging and a motivating experience.

4. The experiment suggests that a teacher does not have to be constantly available, so long as the student does occasionally have someone to interact with in the language. It appears that the student is satisfied that the program itself serves most teaching functions. The teacher, therefore, may have to assume a radically different role in this type of approach.

5. If there were an opportunity to schedule deliberately for this type of project, as many individuals could pursue a language as there are separate programs, taperecorders, and periods in the day. Assuming, for example, that a school would have ten taperecorders available for a replication of this experiment, the following numbers of students could theoretically be involved in the experiment in a seven period day:

Spanish..... 35 individuals or
70 individuals in pairs

French..... 21 individuals or
42 individuals in pairs

German..... 14 individuals or
28 individuals in pairs

That is, 70 individuals working alone, or 140 individuals working together in pairs could be served by this project with no additional investment in programs. In the course of an academic year, however, additional magnetic tapes would have to be used. Assuming that as many as 200 more would be needed, a large-scale replication of the experiment could cost an additional $392. Since all materials are reusable, the cost of independent study using programmed materials would eventually be reduced to simple replacement of worn-out materials.

6. During the first week of the project, the Coordinator spent perhaps three or four hours a day supervising the program, for a total of about 15-20 hours. Thereafter, the program ran itself. The Coordinator dropped in for five-to-ten minute visits with students on the average of once every ten days. This role could be filled by a trained native-speaking para-professional working once a week with groups of participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The experiment should be replicated during the 1969-70 school year as a full-year experiment with a limited number of students scheduled so as to make the most efficient use of taperecorders and programs.

2. Self-correcting, self-evaluative instruments should be put at the disposal of participants so that they may test themselves at appropriate places in the program.

3. Participants should perhaps be required to keep a notebook so that a record of the written part of the program may be made available to any assisting teacher or native speaker who may be able to enter the experiment on a once-a-week planned basis.

4. Attempts should be made to set up special meetings of all students of a given language with resource people who may volunteer their services.

5. Efforts should be made to furnish occasional films, filmstrips or other visual aids to supplement the program.

6. As many components of the total project as possible should be put within the students' control.

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS AT BEGINNING OF PROJECT, FEBRUARY, 1969

A PROPOSAL TO OFFER INDEPENDENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY BY PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION TO SELECTED TOWNSEND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EIGHTH GRADERS

Proposal

For the remainder of the second semester, certain eighth graders at Townsend Junior High School will be offered an opportunity to explore French, German, and Spanish by programmed instruction in independent study. The Foreign Language Coordinator will coordinate the program. Time will be created for student participation by dispensing them from their present reading classes.

Selection of Participants

A limited number of carefully screened students will be offered this opportunity. Criteria for selection will include placement at the ninth stanine in language aptitude testing, strong interest in foreign language study, and the ability and the desire to sustain academic effort entirely through self-motivation. Parents and students will agree in writing to the procedural provisions of the proposal.

Purpose

The design of the program should permit students to develop a limited but thorough background of skills in the language chosen, and should serve to test the suitability of this mode of instruction for use at the junior high school level. Since pacing will be at the option of the individual, the program will be limited only by time, programmed materials, and individual initiative.

Objectives

Only certain language objectives are attainable outside the con-

text of normal conversational interaction. These, however, are important, worthwhile foundation skills for any subsequent language study: 1) control of the sound system of the language, 2) oral and written mastery of a limited number of basic structures, and 3) limited reading and writing proficiency.

Since controlled conversational interaction cannot yet be economically structured into independent study, there can be no objective of speaking fluency. It may be assumed, however, that a good foundation for its eventual acquisition will have been laid.

Limitations

This program of three months' duration is not designed as a substitute for any part of a normal first-year language course. The selection of linguistic material and the methodology employed will so differ, that the beginning course at the high school level should not be a mere repetition of previous learning experiences. It may happen, rarely, that an unusually talented, highly motivated student will independently achieve a degree of proficiency which may merit consideration for advanced standing. This should not be expected. Normally, the student will enroll in the first-year course in the high school.

Procedures

1. Students and parents will meet with the principal and the coordinator for a briefing on the nature, purpose, and expectations of the program.

2. Each participant will be provided with the use in school of a taperecorder, a written program in the language of his choice (French, German, or Spanish), and tapes which are an integral part of the program.

To supplement these, and to afford variety, from time to time additional recordings of music, taped conversations, filmstrips, films, and other audio-visual aids will be made available to individuals or to groups studying the same language.

3. Each student will receive individual orientation in the effective use of the equipment and materials at the beginning of the program.

4. Each individual will be scheduled for independent study in the library or other suitable space in the school during his reading period. He will be responsible for proper use of time, space, equipment, and materials. Abuse of any of these will be cause for a return to reading class. Decisions will rest with the principal.

5. Arrangements may be made for additional use of the materials in school when they are free. Materials may not be removed from the building.

6. Periodically throughout the program, the coordinator will counsel individually with students. His assistance will generally be limited to matters pertaining to effective use of the equipment, materials, and supplementary aids provided by the district. Visits will occur on an average of once every ten days after the program is launched. They will generally be unannounced. The coordinator will make no tutorial arrangements involving himself or any other foreign language teacher. For students of high ability, the materials should be completely self-instructional in the achievement of limited objectives. Questions and reasonable requests that arise between visits may be made in writing through the principal. In the event of serious breakdown in the use of materials, calls should be made immediately through the principal.

7. The coordinator will administer or otherwise provide instructions for periodic evaluations published by the author of the programmed materials. At the end of the program the participants may take standardized proficiency tests in listening, reading, and writing which will be scored. A speaking test may be taken, but it will not be scored at district expense. Grades will not be given, but scores attained on supervised tests may be registered at the option of the student. Testing need not be supervised.

8. If for any reason the student feels that he cannot profit from the use of the materials on a given day or for a given period of time, or if he decides to abandon work in the program, he should return to his reading class.

9. The coordinator will keep whatever records are necessary to provide data for evaluation of the total program, including the taping of student voices.

John F. Bockman
Foreign Language Coordinator
Tucson Public Schools

(date)_____

We have read a PROPOSAL TO OFFER INDEPENDENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY BY PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION, and we accept its provisions.

(signed)_____
(parents)

_____
(student)

(Please return to Mr. Logan.)

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SUBMITTED TO PARTICIPANTS AT END OF PROJECT, MAY, 1969

Townsend Junior High School
Independent Foreign Language Study Program
March - June, 1969
Date of Report: August, 1969

N - 17

Results of Questionnaire

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1. Independent foreign language study was usually an interesting and satisfying experience	14	2	1
2. I would gladly take another opportunity in the future to study a subject independently using programmed materials	12	2	3
3. I found independent study a progressively more boring experience	3	14	0
4. I was bored only occasionally	13	4	0
5. My boredom seemed to stem from working alone	4	9	3
6. My boredom seemed to stem from the nature of the programmed materials	7	9	1
7. I prefer always to work completely alone	0	14	3
8. I prefer always to work as a member of a pair	4	6	6
9. I prefer to work partly alone and partly as a member of a team	12	3	2
10. I appreciate the opportunity to set my own pace	16	1	0
11. I believe a teacher should set the pace for me	0	15	2
12. I would prefer to work as a member of a regular class	1	9	6
13. Independent study is probably designed for high-ability students only	9	4	4
14. Programmed materials could probably be used effectively by low-ability students	4	7	6
15. Programmed materials are generally exciting and challenging	8	4	4
16. Programmed materials are often difficult	9	4	4
17. Programmed materials are frequently childish	4	10	3
18. I believe this project will help me in next year's classroom study of a foreign language	17	0	0
19. The coordinator gave me enough help in learning to use the program properly	16	0	1
20. The coordinator gave me enough help in solving problems involving the language	8	5	4

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
21. In most instances, the program itself helped me solve problems involving the language.....	16	1	0
22. The project would be improved if a teacher were made available regularly once a week to answer questions about the program.....	12	2	3
23. The teacher should be made available regularly more often than once a week.....	2	10	5
24. The teacher should be made regularly available about once every two weeks.....	4	8	5
25. The teacher should limit his help to problems that arise in the programmed materials.....	4	10	3
26. The teacher should teach the language in addition to the programmed materials.....	8	6	3
27. A native speaker would serve at least as well as a teacher to supplement the programmed materials.....	15	2	0
28. A native speaker of about my age would perhaps be most effective to supplement the programmed materials.....	11	4	2
29. I believe that the objectives of this program are more limited than those of a regular foreign language course.....	7	5	5
30. I am now more interested in foreign language study than I was when the project started.....	13	3	1

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF IDEAS EXPRESSED BY STUDENT-PARTICIPANTS OF THE INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM

Interview with Ann

May 22, 1969

Talking to Ann who has been studying French in our 3-month program. Ann has been using Active French Foundation Course Book I by Fernand Marty.

How much of this program have you finished by this time, Ann?

I am in the beginning of Unit 7.

So you have finished 6 whole units which has taken you up to page 134 of this first book, Active French Foundation Course. Can you tell me, in general, what you have thought of the past 3 months of studying French?

Well it was interesting. It was different.

Did it turn out to be anything at all like you thought it would be when we started?

Yes.

Do you think we really told you, in the letter that we wrote that you and your parents read and signed, pretty much what this was all going to be about?

Yes.

We didn't leave anything out?

No.

We didn't lead you astray. We didn't lead you to think that you were going to get something out of it that you didn't get?

No.

Have you been in general satisfied with the experience?

Yes.

Is there anything at all that has been disappointing about it?

Well, it is kind of hard working alone.

That's right. Well first of all, as I have told you several times, this is a more difficult program than the others that we have here--or maybe I didn't tell you that. We do have a French program here that is easier. It is the other French program that you may have noticed in the library. And the German program and the Spanish program are all easier than this one, but this has an excellent reputation, and of course I think has been designed for use on the college level. So actually it requires you to do things which a great many people your age probably would find very difficult, if not impossible, to do. So it has been difficult to work without a teacher. Could you give us some examples of problems that you met where a teacher would have been very helpful to you?

Well, it is not only that. It is just that, you know, sometimes like if you mispronounce a word you'll never know it. You can keep on doing that and get a bad habit.

That's right. That's possible.

You have to be pretty careful.

Do you think that the tape helps you correct mistakes in pronounciation that you make?

Yes, it helps a lot.

The question now, the tape isn't able to say, "Well now, you say that again as you didn't say it the way I did." Are you concerned about your pronounciation of French?

No, well I could be. I just don't know. It's just that I am not too certain.

Of course, this is one of the principal difficulties. Your ear has to be good enough to be able to tell the difference between what you have said and what the voice on the tape has said to be able to compare it and where necessary make the corrections in your own sounds. Now I have the feeling that some people can do that better than other people. Now I would imagine, judging from your performance on the apptitude battery, that you possess this ability to hear the difference between what you have said and what the speaker has said, and that you therefore have the ability to make whatever changes are necessary to make your uttered sounds like the voice on the tape. But even then, I admit, that since you are your own judge in this matter that you certainly might suspect that at times you are wrong. Suppose it were possible for us to bring a French teacher in occasionally, or let's say to bring a French teacher into this program, how often do you think it would be necessary or desirable for you to work with the French teacher to alleviate this weakness of the program?

Well, I think it might even be better if I could work with someone else. Not in a class, not that big, because that isn't any good because some people hold you back. Just a couple who are of the same ability. I tried that with another person and we kept going back, so I wish I could find someone who is the same speed as me and then I would know. It would be better.

Excellent observation. In other words, you think you would make better progress nd be more certain of your progress, especially in pronounciation, if you could work with at least one other person who would proceed at the same pace as you yourself.

Yes.

We have tried to pair a few students, as you know, in Spanish and we are interested in seeing what the effect of this has been. This is a suggestion that has been made in conjunction with independent study of this sort--that students work in pairs as they can reinforce one another and help correct one another, as well as learn from one another. That is a very interesting observation.
Have you found that as time has gone on these 3 months that you have been less willing to come in and work on the program?

Yes, sometimes. You are all alone, it's so silent, it's so dead.

So you feel that if this were to go on long enough you might reach a point where you would not really want to continue working on the program?

Yes, I think so, maybe.

How long do you think that it would take? Have you any idea? Now you have been at it 3 months.

Well, of course, this is the end of the year and I feel that way about all my subjects.

Of course now maybe this is not a fair question, but it would help us I think. Suppose you had started in September instead of March. You started the first week of September, you had never gotten into the reading class in the first place. You came right in and started working on this program in French, starting September 1st. It would now be about the 22nd of November, let's say, and you still have a month to go before Christmas. Can you imagine whether or not you would feel sort of fed-up with the course?

No, I think it would be better because it would be easier to adjust yourself if you started at the beginning of the year. It is sort of rushing at the end of the year.

What has caused the rush?

I can't get enough in. I want to get more in.

In other words, you're rushing yourself. You want very badly to finish more and more of this program. Now this is interesting because, you see, if you were in a classroom, how fast could you go--if you were in a regular classroom with 30 other kids?

I don't think I would go very fast.

You would go as fast as the teacher in the class went. But, you see, who determines in this program how fast you go?

I do.

That's right. Of course the tape can only turn so fast
But you didn't have to work through 6 units in this program. You could have worked only through 3 or 4 or 5, and nobody would have said a word. You have actually be en pacing yourself. Do you think you may have been trying to pace yourself too fast.

No, I don't think so. I just wish I could have more time. Really wish I could have started at the beginning of the year.

In other words, you would like to have a whole year to do this

Yes.

So your disappointment, if there is a disappointment here, is not really due to the program, it is due to the limitations in time. Right?

Yes.

Now if it were possible for me to give you the program and the tapes over the summer, what would you do with them--if you could get at a tape recorder? Would you put them on the shelf and leave them there?

No.

Do you think you would work on them?

Yes.

In other words, you feel that you are really quite highly motivated to learn French, and to learn it by this method.

Yes.

Now you have pointed out some of the problems of working by yourself in this room which is occupied only by you, and the difficulties of knowing when you are right, very often because there is nobody else there to help you. Do you think that there are any advantages that you would like to talk about in this kind of study that you feel sure would not exist in a regular classroom?

I can go as fast as I like, and if I find it difficult--well like in unit 3. I talked with some other people taking French and they had trouble with 1 and 2, but they went really fast through unit 3. But unit 3 was harder than 1 and 2 for me, so I could stop over the difficult places.

I personally feel that this would be a real advantage to me because if I could put the program away for a while because I was too busy or too preoccupied, or simply didn't feel good, and then I could pick it up and work at it just as fast as I wanted to when I felt good and felt like I wanted to do it, to me this is a real advantage over a regular classroom where you have to move at a certain rate whether you want to or not.
We have talked several times about difficulties, and of course I have acknowledged that this program is designed for college level students. Do you think that perhaps I made a mistake in bringing this kind of a program into the 8th grade?

No, I don't think so. It wasn't that hard. The other one I looked at was sort of easy. It was just like you were trying to get a lot of things in. They ask such stupid questions. They didn't make sense.

Well, you see, they don't allow any room for error. In other words, they have found out they have to include this many frames or the student is likely to make a mistake, he is liable not to be able to take these steps with you. So they have worked into the program as many frames as are necessary to permit this smooth passage from one concept to the next. Now this book here does not proceed along those lines. It does allow room for error, much more room for error than the other, but it also challenges you a great deal more. Did you notice that?

I have come in several times while you were working on the program. Now you know that I am not a French teacher, but know that I am a foreign language teacher and might be able to help you in some respect. How did you feel about my coming in while you were working on the program? Be perfectly honest.

Well, I didn't like it too much.

Why didn't you like it? Tell us about it. Now remember you are not offending me. I understand this and appreciate it, but I would like to know why the student reacts the way he does, if possible, and it would help us a great deal in planning a program like this for other students if you would tell me now exactly why and how and so forth.

It's a little hard, after you have gone for so long and you've got sort of a set pattern and you are not too sure whether you are pronouncing right, if someone comes in and hears you then you are afraid, you're self-conscious.

There is a danger that you might be so wrong that the teacher might be up-set, or something like that?

Yes.

And if he's up-set and has to tell you what is right, that this in turn will make you feel bad, make you feel less secure. So there is a danger when someone else walks into the program. But if you were working with another student, you wouldn't feel that way?

No. Not if I had started from the very beginning. (Mistakes I might have had would have been corrected by then.)

Now because of what we are talking about, it is very, very important that we consider the next question because in September you will be going into a French class with a French teacher, and it is going to be Catalina, and it will be Mr. Bunge who is a native speaker of French, he is from France. How do you look forward to that, meeting your French teacher at Catalina? Do you feel nervous about it?

No. You are not so frightened over a foreign language when you have had a little in 8th grade.

In other words, you think that you have overcome some problems by taking this program?

Yes.

And that it has not created any problems for you when you move into the French program at Catalina? Can you think of any problems that you might meet as a result of having taken this course here?

No, I don't think I will regret it. Any problem I would have had, I think I can correct by the time I get to Catalina.

You realize that in the classroom the teacher will be doing things differently from the way the program did it. There will be some things that will sound familiar to you, and there will be other things that will be completely unfamiliar to you. There will be new things for you to learn from the very beginning, from the very start of the program at Catalina.

Now as we look forward to the possibility of setting up a program like this next year for 8th graders in September, we have to realize that there will be some differences. This has lasted only 3 months. The other program would last 9 months. In what things do you think we might have to watch as we think in terms of extending this program from a 3 to a 9 month program? Have you thought about any problems that might arise?

I think you better be careful in whom you pick because this is sort of.....they have to be pretty....

They have to be pretty heavily motivated?

Yes. They have to really want to do it because otherwise they are going to get bored.

Now you don't have to mention any names, I certainly don't want you to mention names, but do you have the impression that the other students that are working in this program in other periods are generally the kind of people who belong in this program?

Yes, I think so.

In other words, you don't think we made any serious mistakes in picking people for this program?

No.

Now you know that they are picked because of their language aptitude, and you understand the relationship between aptitude and the ability to succeed in something, there is no question about that. Well, suppose that we pick students for this program next year by the same criteria---in other words, the placement on the various parts of the apptitude battery. Do you think that that would be enough to insure that we picked the right people. Now of course one of the things is the interest of foreign language study. This is part of the battery, the measurement of interest. Do you think we would be on safe ground to limit it to the same kind of people who were picked this year.

Yes, I think so. Well, I'm not so sure about anybody else.

But, in other words, you realize that you were the kind of person that was picked on these criteria, and so if other people would generally meet the same criteria do you think, other things being equal, it would be pretty successful?

Yes.

Do you think that perhaps we ought to let somebody else in who is less capable?

No. I think that if you didn't have enough people that were high enough, and you start lowering it, I think it would be a disaster.

In other words this kind of a program is definitely for the high aptitude kids?

Right.

Well thank you, Ann. I guess it is time for you to go now.

Interview with Randy and Keith

I am talking with Randy and Keith this morning. Do you two fellows know each other by any chance?

Kind of.

When I come in here I just assume everybody knows everbody else, and that might not be true. The thing is, what we would like to do is to find out how you have enjoyed, or how you have not enjoyed, the experience that you have had in the last 3 months with these programs. You have been working with the French, the Active French program, and you have been working on German A.

Would you like to say something about your reaction in general?

I like it. It is a good idea.

Is there anything you don't like about it.

No.

Randy, how about you?

I like it real well. It makes you push yourself to work. Sometimes it is a little bit boring.

Now this, of course, is one of the things people point out about self-instructional material. It has to be so structured as to make it impossible for you to make any serious mistakes. If they were to permit that, you would soon have to give up because you would soon be in such deep water. But because it is carefully structured, and because it does not allow you to make too many mistakes, it also tends to be somewhat monotonous. Now the question is, is the monotony so serious, or has it been so serious during this 3-month period that you have been tempted to give it up. How about you Randy?

No. It has never been so boring that I wanted to give it up.

Do you think that if you were to go on and do this for 9 months that it might get so boring that you would not want to complete it?

I don't think so because you make enough progress and you see how far....

You feel satisfied with the progress you make and this is enough to overcome the boring situations that sometimes arise. How about you Keith, have you ever felt bored?

No.

You felt no boredom at all?

No.

Do you think that there is enough interest built into the program so that you are always anxious to see what's happening next?

Yes.

Now you are working on two different programs. Not only two different languages, but they are different kinds of programs, as a matter of fact. The one that you are working on is really geared to the college level student. Yours is one that really is geared to the junior high school or high school student as well as the college student. The thing is that your program requires a great deal more steps than his program does to reach a certain goal. And your program takes rather big leaps, if you will notice, and a lot of material in one frame. Has that difference, the fact that there is so much in a frame, been a source of some of the boredom you have mentioned?

Sometimes it is. They won't put enough emphasis on an important point.

Do you think that the important thing could escape you in that program until maybe the next unit, and all of a sudden you realize you should have known that.

Yes, it could.

It isn't as carefully structured as Keith's program. It is really designed to be used with a teacher much more than Keith's program. And this brings up this question. What do you think of this idea of learning a subject without a teacher--without a human being as a teacher?

I think it is a real great idea because you can go at your own pace. You aren't slowed down or speeded up by the other students. I think it is just a real great idea.

In other words, you don't find this in any way unsatisfying, that you don't have a human teacher to turn to?

No.

How about you Keith?

Well basically I feel the same way. It is super. There are times when there is something that you can't figure out and that you can't get right.

This, of course, is a danger element in a program like this which is designed to be used for self-instruction. How about situations that arise when you simply can't figure your way out of them? Has this happened very often--that you can't figure out what to do next?

No. Not to me I don't think any time. Sometimes I have gone back a little bit and then go over it again, but there has never been one I just couldn't get.

In other words, there is always something there somewhere, even though you don't see it the first time.

Yes.

And you do have to repeat sometimes in order to pick up a thread of thought.

Keith, where are the problem areas in the program where you could use somebody to explain instantaneously?

It is not in the program. It is me, in the pronounciation.

Now here is one of the areas which I consider crucial. We know that from a lot of experimentation that has been done that you don't always hear what you think you hear, especially when the sounds are other than the ones you make, and there is a great possibility misinterpreting what you hear so that you hear "RRRR" and you interpret it as "rrrr" - in a different part of the mouth, you see. But you are going to say what you interpret it to be, not what it really is, because you have to go by how it occurs to you. The hope is that in the very beginning of the program when they are teaching these sounds, and then periodically again when new sounds are brought in, that the contrast between the English sound and the French sound, or the English sound and the German sound, will register with you so that you can pick up and actually make the French or the German sound about as closely as you are capable of making it. We know that you have a certain mouth, and a certain set of lips, and certain vocal cords, and so forth--we are not going to change that part of you. So the sound that you make is the one that you think you hear and the one that you think is duplicating what you hear. Does this disturb you in any way--that you may have learned a few sounds wrong. Now this is a possibility, that you might have learned a few sounds wrong, especially when there has been no human being here to catch these mistakes right away. Does this bother you?

Well a little

Well, this then is a source of problem, I'll bet you anything.

It doesn't bother me too much because they go over the sounds and everything enough times . You can tell fairly well what they sound like.

This would differ with individuals. Some people would trust their ability to discriminate the sounds that they hear and their ability to duplicate the sounds that they hear more than other people. And this, of course, is perfectly normal and natural. Do you think that there is a danger (this is something that critics of this approach would be very likely to make) do you think that there is a danger that you could have learned a sound so wrong that it will become part of you and will not be corrected when you get into German classes?

There might be.

So we would have to watch this, wouldn't we? Now next year if and when we start this with 8th graders again (especially the opportunity to study Spanish and having French and German, because we will have a Spanish teacher here in the building) I hope that we can arrange to have a teacher come in more often than I have come in. Now I have noticed that when I have come in that (you have been working independently for sometime) and I notice that when I come in there is a kind of interference that I create. Have you noticed that?

Slightly.

Now I'll ask the other kids this too and I'll get the reply that I probably would get from you. Would you rather that I not show up--to put it bluntly?

No.

You would rather I show up?

Yes.

You like to see me rather than not see me?

Well, it's that I need help sometimes.

So when I show up you don't say, "Oh, Lord, here he comes." -- you say "Good, he's here."

Well, you do get sort of worried because, you know, you worry when the teacher drops in.

Well, yes, but in a self-instructional program like this you know that I am not evaluating you, I'm not grading you. You know that there is no danger. I can't hurt you, you know.

But when you see somebody come you forget all about that.

Well, some of the kids seem to think that since I don't come very often, and of course my duties won't let me come over here that often, as often as I'd like to, that they are out of the habit of having somebody supervise their work and, therefore, they would rather not be interfered with. They feel that when they get into a language class next year, of course the situation will be different, the relationship will be different, and they will develop a new one and it won't interfere, but that this year my coming around to some extent has bothered some of them--not all of them. How do you feel about having a teacher come in about once a week, or once every two weeks, who is competent to teach the language?

I think it is a good idea.

You would like to see this done for the new people. How about you, Randy?

I think that would be a good idea too.

It would be a real complement to the course, wouldn't it?

Yes, to check you as you go along--make sure you don't make these mistakes.

Right. Well, this is what we hope to do and of course if we ever implemented this program more fully this is what we may insist upon. This is highly experimental, you know, this year, these 3 months. It was highly experimental. The main thing was, I think, to determine that the students would actually be so interested that they would keep on studying over the 3 month period. And I think that has been proven. Don't you?
Can you imagine, now you have had 3 months experience, can you imagine that if this were to go on for a whole year, starting in September, that there might come a time during the year when the student would say, "I've had enough of this nonsense." Does that point ever occur to you?

I don't think it would happen to me, but it might affect another student that way.

Because of differences, right. You don't think that it would occur to you--to quit the program?

No. I plan on taking it all 4 years in high school and _____ college.

That's good. I'm glad to hear that. That's fine. Is there anything you think we ought to know. You have been working with these materials now for 3 months. You know what the technique is; you know what some of the problems are. Do you think there is anything that I might not understand because I haven't done this myself, I just set it up?

No. It is very easy to understand.

Randy?

I think it is pretty easy to understand. It might be better if you had different people talking because you get used to this one person, and the way another person would talk in this language would be almost completely different.

I had hoped to bring additional tapes, and I had hoped we could arrange some programs in which some people that speak German and French could come in and talk to you once in a while, but you know none of this was possible, it turned out.

Well, I want to thank you very, very much.

The only trouble I ever had was I spent a whole day trying to get the recorder to play a tape

Somebody had rewound it so the wrong side was facing out, and what happened when I came in and saw it, I just ran it to that point and then very carefully turned the thing over and then wound it so the right side was out.

OK, fellows, thanks a lot.

Interview with Lorrie

And you are Lorrie ?

Yes.

And you have been taking this German A course since the first week of March. Is that right?

Correct.

Do you recall what frame you are on, or what book you are on? Will you tell us?

I am in the book 1A, and 3A on my tape.

You are on tape 3A, but still in the first book.

Yes.

I see. Do you remember what frame you are on?

About in the 60's.

Sure it is the 60's? Sure it is not 600

No, it goes to a thousand, then it.....

Oh, I see. So it is 1060, or something like that?

Yes.

Could you tell me, in general, how you feel about what you have done the past 3 months?

Well, it makes it really clear.

Every step of the way--is it clear?

Yes, really clear, except if they could explain about direct objects.

In other words, there is no explanation about such things as direct objects.

Right.

But do you feel that you can recognize a direct object when you see it?

Yes.

In German?

Yes.

Do you feel that you know what a direct object is well enough so that if you have to form the German sentence from English instructions you can do so?

Yes.

Well, what seems to be lacking then? In other words you can do things that require your understanding what a direct object is, but....

But when I do it, it turns out wrong.

In other words, you can't really be sure?

No. Well see, I don't know when to use der or den. I know when to use das.

OK. das and die. You don't have to worry about the form because the direct object is the same as the subject form.

Right. Meinen, seinen?

So it is in the masculine, it is in the der words. It is the der words that you can't be sure when you are supposed to change it to den or einen or seinen.

Right.

Well, the program has not really helped you then to make that distinction in your own mind clearly. OK. But how do you feel in general about this way of doing things, this way of learning something?

It goes, you know, from acting like your real dumb, and just brings you up. I think it is really good.

You like the idea?

Yes.

You understand, of course, that when you don't have a teacher to explain everything to you--and you haven't had a teacher explain anything to you in German, have you ?

No.

You haven't, that's right. Then the whole job has to be done by the program, so it has to be built structurally so that you start with what you know, which is nothing in German, and gradually build up your understanding of the language. Do you find that it has been, in general, a pleasant experience, or has it been a somewhat unpleasant experience. Can you talk about that a minute?

It doesn't make me bored, because it goes on to different subjects. It doesn't drag out.

You feel then that over this entire 3-month period you have been working on the program that it has not really bored you at any time?

It hasn't bored me.

Do you feel more reluctant today to go in and get the tapes, and check out the tape recorder than you did at the beginning; or do you find that you feel just about as enthusiastic today as you did in March?

I like it just as well.

So there has been no decrease in your interest in this program?

No.

Do you feel that you have gotten anything out of it? Do you feel that you can take something away from this experience now? Or do you feel that things are pretty nebulous? Things are pretty much up-in-the-air, and that you can't really pin-point much that you have learned. How do you feel about that?

Oh, I've learned a whole lot from it.

You have learned a whole lot?

Yes. And I can pronounce, or sound it out.

You can sound things out correctly?

Yes.

Do you feel that you have a mastery of all the various bits of information and knowledge of the various things that you have been required to do. Do you feel that you have a mastery of all this today; that there are no gaps in what you have done in the past. In other words, that you haven't really forgotten any substantial part of what you have done?

No, I don't think I have.

It has built up so that you really can't do anything today unless you remember everything you have done in the past.

That's right.

But, nevertheless you still feel that there is something weak about your understanding of the direct object?

Well, most of the time I'm right, but sometimes I'm wrong.

When you find that you have been right, did you think that you knew for sure, or are you surprised to find that you have been mistaken? When you are wrong, do you think, "Well, I really don't know what I'm doing."

That's right. Of course, sometimes I'm sure.

Sometimes you are sure you are right?

Yes.

Now, this is what I wanted to find out. In other words, there are times when you have to use the direct object when you feel absolutely certain that you know how to do it right.

Yes.

Now there are other times when you have to use the direct object and you are doubtful.

Right.

What are the results when you find you are doubtful? Are you usually wrong? Do you turn out to be wrong? You know the tape corrects you, right? Or the program corrects you. Is there any difference between the times that you are right and the times you are wrong?

No, it is just about half and half. It is hardly any times I have to use a direct object right--in whatever it is.

Well, this is really, I think, what I am trying to drive at. Have you made mistakes in the use of the direct object because you haven't been very careful sometimes, or are your mistakes due to a fundamental lack of understanding of what the direct object is--you can't really identify it?

Well, I think sometimes I didn't think--I just wrote.

Just wrote the subject form?

Right.

Instead of the object form.

Yes.

OK. Well, do you feel that in English you understand when you are using direct objects.

Yes.

How did you get that.

I got a "1" on the test.

You got a "1" on the test. In other words, you have a very good background in English in the use of the objective case, and you can identify the object of a preposition or object of a verb in English without any question at all. Do you find that any of this transfers to German for you? Do you notice that the same thing occurs in German that occurs in English?

Well, no, because we don't have--like 3 kinds of "the's" so it is harder.

Well don't you think the problem in English is even harder because both the subject form and the object form are the same, like--the house, the house is there, and I see the house. In each instance, we have "the house," but in one sentence it is the subject and in the other sentence it is the object. Now, that is like, Das Haus ist hier. Ich sehe das Haus. There is no problem there because the form and the accusative form are the same. But in German now in the masculine you have a distinction in form:-- den and dem --you see?

Yes.

It is only in the masculine that you have problems, right, when you are dealing with words like den and dem?

Right.

Do you think it is simply a matter of time as you continue to work in the program when this will become absolutely clear? I mean, do you have confidence in the program to believe that the program will evidentually make this all perfectly clear to you? Or do you have the feeling as you are going along that there are a lot of loose ends being left in your mind as you are moving along.

It just seems like I'll be in the dark about that until--well I don't know.

Does it ultimately get clarified.

I think if I took it in high school it would clear up.

Do you feel that your work in this course these 3 months has probably helped you to get ready for high school German? Do you feel confident about that?

Yes.

What makes you think that that's going to be a help to you?

Because before I didn't know one thing, and now I can sort of construct sentences.

Have you actually had the feeling that you could [redacted] go away , that you could take off from the program and make sentences of your own? Have you tried it?

Oh, I've just goofed around.

Goofed around--but you have done it.

Yes, but they are not complicated.

Well, let's say then that we would not expect you to be doing things that are more complicated than what the program offers to you, and that as time goes on and the program becomes more complicated you will be in a position to generate more complicated sentences.

Right.

How do you feel about not having a German teacher with a program like this? Do you feel that it is a terrible disadvantage?

No I don't mind it. It is just as easy, I think, or easier.

Whenever I have come in -- and I haven't come in too often -- but have you found that my presence inhibits your work, or does it make it more difficult to work on the program because you have me standing around watching you?

Well it sort of bugs me--but not too much.

And of course you know me, you like me a little bit, I mean you don't hate me terribly. So the interference is probably because you have been depending upon the program and you have not been depending on me for your German.

Right.

Do you think that this kind of beginning in German will make it difficult for you to relate to a German teacher next year.

No, I can just take it on as a new thing.

Right. In other words, you are just going to step into a German class at Sahuaro High School next September and you are going to take that for what it is, get used to it and do whatever is required there.

Right

That's a good healthy attitude. But while you are working on this program you feel that the teacher is a kind of an intrusion, in a way. I come in and I ask you to find something or do something and this is extraneous to the program, isn't it?

No, I don't think so, because sometimes you catch my mistakes.

In other words I have helped occasionally when I've come in.

Yes.

Do you think that it would be helpful if all of the kids that are taking German here at Townsend (I think there are 3 of you) could get together at other times and work somehow together either with a teacher like myself coming in, or say we would have a program set up where we could bring in some German speaking people. Do you think it would be helpful?

Yes, I think it would be neat.

You like the idea. Could you think about that and let me know.

When would we be doing it?

Well, I don't know what the regulations are over here at Townsend, but maybe we could have it in the evenings sometime; we could have it maybe at the Education Center or at one of the high schools that are open. And it occurs to me we could set up programs on some regular basis, maybe once a month, and get some German speaking people interested in helping the kids out that are working on these programs.
Would you rather have had the opportunity to study German this way this year than not to have had the opportunity to study German?

I'm glad I did because it just gives me more background. I was thinking I feel dumber than the rest of the people.

Why? You shouldn't feel dumber. You are a very smart girl. How do your parents feel about what is happening to you in German, or haven't they really been able to keep up-to-date with what has been occurring? Do you talk to them much about it?

Yes. Well they are proud that I even got to do this, and my Dad took German and he likes it, I know he does, and when I go home I ask him if he knows what this word means, or I say a sentence, and they're interested in it.

He seems to think that this has been worthwhile?

Yes. Then I tell him all about just possibly taking this over the summer, and he says "maybe."

Good. I must look into the matter of your getting over to Sahuaro perhaps to listen in the library.
Well, you think in general that a student in the 8th grade here at Townsend Jr. High School might be able to do this for an entire year witout getting bored?

Yes. I think they could. There have been 3 days that I haven't (illegible)
It's because I didn't do my homework the night before. But that wasn't because I was bored. It was just that I had to get it done and I thought the German could wait. But I think it would be neat just having it as a regular class.

How do the other kids that are not taking these programs this year feel about this? Have you talked to some of them about it. Have you gotten any reaction from them? Do they think this is a terrible thing that you are able to study German this way and they can't?

They think, well, I think they think, that you really have got to be super smart because the say "Golly, wasn't it you that was so great that you got...." You know, they just sort of look up to you I think.

Do you think there is a certain amount of prestige attached to being in this program?

Yes, of course.

How do the teachers feel about it? Do the teachers ask you anything about it?

Well, my reading teacher when I got transferred out of there justs asks me once in a while, "How are you doing." And I just say "fine."

Do they seem to think you would be better off back in the reading class, or have you any reactio n from them.

She doesn't know anything about what I am doing. She knows I'm taking German, but she would probably think it was all right.

Lori, is there anything else you would like to say that we could put on the tape as a reaction to this experience?

No, just that it is really...I think it is neat. You can learn a lot from it.

Do you think it was made pretty clear to you before you started that there were limitations to what you could learn. Do you think I made it clear (remember that letter that I wrote) so you weren't expecting to be able to speak like a native when you were done?

No.

You realized there were definite limitations?

Yes. Just like if you were in a class you don't learn very much.

OK, Lori, thanks a lot.

Interview with Kenneth , Karen , Monette , Dolores , Wesley , and Laurie

What we would like to have done today is to react to the program that we have conducted now for the past 3 months in Spanish by independent study using programed material. We would like to know how you feel about it. Whether you are still enthusiastic about it, or whether you think it was a big mistake, and so forth, and so forth. What do you think?

I think that the idea of having no teacher has its disadvantages and advantages. For one thing, I think, of course there are no questions, and if you have a question you can't ask a teacher, but I think that the program is well enough explained that you don't need one.

How often do you think you could have used a teacher to clarify something that the program didn't ultimately clarify?

Not many times, very few. I could count them on my one hand.

How about the rest of you. Do you think that is pretty general? Or did your experience differ?

I didn't need a teacher too much.

Suppose we could have a teacher come in and visit with you periodically in a way that I was not able to do, and be there to answer your specific questions about specific parts of the program. How often should a teacher come in for this purpose? How often should be required to do the kind of job that needs to be done here?

About once a week.

You think once a week would be enough?

Maybe we could stretch it to once every two weeks.

And what should the teacher do when he comes? Should he say, "Now tomorrow I want you to do this and that and the other thing, and I want you to write a composition in Spanish by Friday."

No, I think if we wanted to ask the teacher questions then we could, otherwise.... I kind of like it being left alone. You are more tempted to goof off, but it is kind of fun being your own boss at it, and I'd just as soon the teacher didn't come in very often. Though sometimes you do have questions, it's pretty easy.

May I say something about the program in general?

Yes.

I would like to say I think that when they introduce a new word in this program--I know at the beginning they said it about 3 times. I think this is a waste of tape and our time. I think now as I progress in the book they had it once or twice which is faster, but I think we could have gone a little faster.

Now don't forget that a program like this is actually designed to be used by people of various abilities. Now you are all high ability (you've been told that a million times, and I hope it hasn't gone to your head) but, nevertheless, it is

a fact that on these tests you score very high so you can imagine that this program works pretty well with people of your ability. But how about somebody with half your ability and aptitude? Obviously people like that need more time so they need more repetition and so forth. So bear that in mind. It is all right to be critical of the program, I want you to express yourself, but the reason why it goes so slow at the beginning is to make sure that even the very slow learner can keep up with it.

Well I was going to say after this that the vocabulary reviews after so long are invaluable.

But Dolores and I found sometimes that they didn't have all the words in there.

They didn't have all the words in the vocabulary list that are in the program?

Like you need a word to find out what a sentence means and they don't have it.

Now I gather that you don't think that the program is boring as such. Right?

Sometimes it was. It's real hot and I figured I didn't want to go to Spanish at all. But most of the time I kind of looked forward to it.

Well you see now, the way I have envisioned this, if you did feel out-of-sorts for some reason, tired, or something like that, or simply didn't feel like it today, that you didn't have to work on this program. I had it envisioned that this would be there for you to use in this period assuming that you really wanted to work on it. Now I presume that the situations you are talking about are situations where you weren't much for school anytime--any kind of school.

Right.

In other words, it was just a bad day for you--a blah day. But is the program itself, is the way it's organized, and the way you have to work at it, is that boring in any way.

No, really.

I think that sometimes when they introduced a new word they just got stuck on it and they stayed on it. Then they went to something else. Then all of a sudden they give the word back and you have practically forgotten it by then.

So there are maybe some elements of boredom in it, but it is the way the presentation has been planned. But by and large, I mean for the most part, about 99% of them, would you say, are fairly interesting. Do you find that you are motivated to keep going; do you want to get into the next tape; do you want to get into the next book?

I keep thinking, "Today I want to finish this tape. Well, today I want to finish this tape." It keeps going and going.

Do you find that you compare your progress with the progress of other people in the group? Or don't you check?

Sometimes

Do you feel that there is any danger that a student will work too fast on the program?

I don't think you could.

I think you can.

Remember you can only go as fast as the tape, you know.

Well that is true. The tape is a limiting factor, but is it possible you could go ahead of your knowledge?

Yes.

Can you actually go ahead of your knowledge?

I did that one time and then I had to go back about a hundred frames.

But [illegible] you think there is sort of a built in safeguard, that you just run out of understanding and you have to go back to a certain point.

If you do all the writing and everything there is not much chance of your getting too far ahead.

That's another thing I wanted to ask you. Do you find you circumvent some of the instructions? You don't do them all?

Yes.

Do you think that is a good idea, or a bad idea? Or do you think it makes no difference?

Depends on how much you skip, I think.

I know when it gets to some parts where you have to put in a dash or a tilda, then you forget that sometimes and that's important.

I used to forget a lot of accents.

Now remember that that is part of the program, to do all those various things, and if you don't do them, of course then you presumably are not learning something that is quite essential. Now do you worry about what kind of a background you are getting for Spanish next year, or haven't you been particularly concerned about it?

Well,I have discussed this with a lot of people that take it at the various high schools, and they say I know the first semester already.

Is that right?

I think this would be very helpful. It gives you background.

Well, one reason why I want to give you the test is to find out how you would compare with students who have finished a year in Spanish. I know you haven't worked a year, you haven't worked the same way they do in high school, but the same material, and therefore we shouldn't expect you to have finished too much.

Has anybody else discussed this with other students in high school who have been through Spanish? Are you pretty well satisfeid that you have covered a comparable amount of territory in the high school?

Yes, except maybe for the conjugation of verbs.

They didn't discuss that.

Now that program consists of eight books. Some of you are in the fifth book. Suppose we put 8th graders to work on this next year, starting in September. When do you think they will run out of the program?

Around Christmas. It goes pretty quickly once you get the idea.

How about the fifth book? Do you find you can make as much progress through the fifth book as fast as you did through the second book?

You go through the first three books--then the fourth book takes a long time.

I got slowed down on the fourth book.

Before school is out would you mind if we all got together again, maybe all of the kids that are in the 8th pe riod, and have another one of these discussions about the program. You can be thinking about ideas you would like to contribute. If we do this again, and I think we will, we would like to do it better if possible. If there is anything we ought to know--you are the experts, you are the ones who have been through the program.
Some people argue that students, particularly young students, will simply not do certain things in relation to school work unless they are forced, unless they are pushed. How do you feel? Do you think a person can actually go through a program like this and keep it up?

If you want to. If they like it.

I've told Mr. Logan and other people that I have talked with about this that every time I go over there, I don't care when it is--I know the kids don't expect me--that they are always working. Oh, there are a couple times when someone has got his assignment to do, but I am not talking about that. They are all set to work. They have the tape recorders out; they've got the tapes; they've got the program. They are set to go whether they are working on it or not, and 99 times out of a 100 they are working at it. Do you think that this is something you can expect from junior high school students?

We did goof off a little, and I'm talking for myself, but most of the times we worked.

Well, you understand though that I don't feel that you have to have that nose to the grind stone so it's rubbed raw. I did the same thing, maybe I told you. I started to study German when I was 14, and I didn't take it in school at all. I just started to study it beacuse I wanted to (relearn) from my grandmother. I was supposed to be studying world history and Latin, and stuff like that, and instead I was studying German. But if I didn't want to study it for a month, I didn't study it for a month. But nothing happened to me for I wasn't signed up for it. And yet I learned German. So I believe it is possible.

It is strange to have a course where you are not pushed for grades and tests. You

are just doing it for the fun of it.

Is this a new experience for you?

Yes.

Have you always wanted to have a class like this?

Yes.

Do you think that because it is so new to you that you appreciate this sort of experience and you have, therefore, been cooperative, but that maybe next year the kids will take it for granted?

It will be new to them too.

I think that if we kept on doing this, if we had started at the beginning of the year, we would know how good it was and then we would just want to keep on going.

If you would like a suggestion for the new program, I'd like to stress more conversation.

This, of course, has been the weakness of the whole program. Remember that letter I wrote to you and your parents at the beginning, the one thing that is lacking is interchange. You can't talk with anybody. You don't have the teacher to talk with; you don't have the fellow students to talk with. This is one of the built-in limitations of the program. Now what I had hoped and was never able to do, was to arrange for programs where we would have native speakers come in, or have you come to some central location and meet with a native speaker of the language, do some other things with some people who speak Spanish--I don't speak Spanish, you understand that. But it was not possible to arrange that kind of thing. When you take Spanish next year you will be in a position where you can talk in the classroom. I would like to keep up with you where ever you go. I'd like to locate you and talk with you periodically and find out how you are doing in Spanish or French, what's happening to you. Whether or not this was a help to you or hindrance to you, and in general how it compares with what you are doing in the high school--whether you are less happy or more happy with what's going on there. We'll just let this thing grow and see what happens as we get more and more students involved. Independent study seems to be about the only way we can afford to give some students foreign language at this level--I am not talking about Spanish as much now as I am talking about French and German.

OK Thank you very much. I sure appreciate it.

Interview with Dorothy and Boyd

This is the 26th of May and I am speaking with Dorothy and Boyd and I would like to ask them if they will tell me what they think of this particular way of studying a school subject--independent study using programmed material.

Dorothy, what do you think of it, in general?

I think it is pretty good because you can go at your own speed.

Do you appreciate being able to go at your own speed?

Yes.

What do you think would have happened to you if you had been in a French class this year where you were one of thirty students?

I think that in my case I would have been bored.

You would have been bored by being in a regular class?

Right.

And the reason you would have been bored?

Well it would probably be because I couldn't go my own speed.

You would either have to go too fast or too slow because the teacher would have to hit a happy medium between the high and the low.

What do you think, Boyd, of this method of study?

I definitely think it's a pretty good idea. I like it definitely.

Is this the first time you have ever done anything this way?

Yes, and I like it because, as Dorothy said, you can go at your own speed, and I also think that it gives you a definite boost for your language in high school.

In other words, you think this is good preparation for what you are going to be doing next year.

Yes.

Now you come from a home where they speak Spanish. You hear enough Spanish spoken so that you don't have any trouble understanding people when they speak Spanish.

That's correct.

Now you realize that this course is called introductory Spanish, and you probably have noticed that there was very little in it that you didn't already know. Is that true?

That's true.

And yet you come in every day and listen to the program.

Yes, because there is a lot that we speak at home that I know what it is, but I am not sure how to pronounce it, and I know in general what it means, but technically I don't know what it means.

So the program is of help to you even though you really know Spanish.

Yes.

Have you ever been bored by it?

No.

What day did you start?

I'm not sure, but I think it was about a month or so ago.

You started in April, as I recall. It was well after the other kids started. How far did you get?

I got to almost the fourth book. I am on 3B.

Now I haven't told you yet, Dorothy and Boyd, but Mr. Logan says that Thursday will be the last day for this because, you know, the school year is coming to an end. Then we will take the tape recorders and the programs out. And so next week for 4 days you will meet in Mr. Logan's office, I guess, and study for your tests, because we have borrowed a lot of tapes from other schools and we want to get them back to them on time.

For a French test?

No, not for a French test. Just study for your other tests, because there is no point in going into your reading class for a reading test.
You might even start the fourth book before Thursday?

I think I probably will.

Dorothy, how far have you gotten in your course?

I was almost to the fourth unit, and I know that I will finish half of the fourth unit.

Now you say that you don't get bored either.

Well a little bit sometimes.

Would you explain when it happens and how it happens?

If you have been studying something for a long time and it doesn't come too easily and you have to keep studying it, it gets a little boring.

Now your program, Active Foundation French, is a rather difficult program. Have you compared it with some of the other programs?

No but I can just tell.

It's a difficult program. It's arranged differently. The frames are much, much bigger. Now the frames in the introductory Spanish course and the modern French course and the German course are very small. I mean they encompass a very small segment of information. Little increments, step by step. Whereas your frames might contain 20 sentences that you are to think out in French. So it is quite a different course and it is really quite complicated. It leaves a lot of room for error. I am sorry that it turned out that way, but you wanted to continue to work on that course rather than switch to modern French.

I think it would be better just to continue on. You would learn more.

I think so too.

Now in other words, what you say is that you did have some problems occasionally.

Right. I think a teacher would have helped.

Do you think that you, Boyd, needed a teacher at any time?

Well there were a few times when I had just learned a word or phrase, and then the period ended and we would have to start cleaning up, and so then to come back to this word or phrase fresh the next day--I would sort of have to go back in the program where the teacher might have been of some assistance.

While the teacher might speed things up a little bit, was the teacher indispensable in that case. Was there any time when you felt that you could not make any progress without a teacher?

No.

Now in your case, Dorothy, your program is different. Did you feel you were really stopped sometimes, stopped cold, and couldn't go on?

No.

Now you were getting some help at home. How much specific help were you given, or were you just inquiring about a few things in general, or were you bringing some of those frames home to have your Dad help you with them?

Just inquiring about some specific things. I tried to work it out myself because I think this course is designed to find out what we could learn, not how much our Dads could help us.

Right. That's a very good observation.

Is this a fair statement? Even though you found some frames difficult, and there were things hard for you to figure out, nothing was insurmountable, there were no insurmountable problems at any time.

No.

Eventually you did figure it out.

Yes.

Yet you did this without becoming discouraged and without becoming absolutely bored so that you were tempted not to continue the course.

Well, sometimes I got a little bit discouraged, but not so discouraged that I would stop.

Now, Boyd, were you tempted to stop at any time and say, "Gee, I know all this anyway. Why should I continue?"

No, because as I said before it was still sort of . . . .

It is something of a challenge even now?

Yes.

Do you think that the first three books that you went through and the work that you have done has really helped organize your knowledge of Spanish pretty well?

Definitely.

Now where are you going to go to study Spanish next year?

Sahuaro.

Fine, I'm glad to hear that. We'll let Miss Ott know. Miss Ott is the chairman of the department over there. We'll let her know that you have had this little bit of exposure to the introductory Spanish course and see what provisions she might be willing to make, or able to make, to sort of continue that while you do the work of the course there. You understand that it will be different material, a different approach, and so forth. It will be a great help to you. It will be interesting to see to what extent this really helped get you ready for that experience.
And you are going to Rincon?

Right.

You will be with Mrs. Perez Ponce over there. She is replacing Mrs. Carter. I've told Mrs. Perez Ponce that there is a student over here that has been studying with this program and we'll see to it that she finds out more about the program and what you have done. It will be very interesting to find out how you adjust to the program over there at Rincon.
You worked on this really a short time. You were at it three months, Dorothy, and you were at it for about a month or five weeks at the most, Boyd. Do you feel that if this had gone on for an entire year, starting in September, that you would perhaps have gotten tired of it? Or do you think that the process, the way it is set up--the listening to tapes, the frames, the progress that you can see ahead, the need for progress--that this kind of makes up for it, and that you probably would still be interested in it if you had to do it for a whole year?

I think that I would have probably gotten a little bored, because in a regular

classroom you have other kids. I don't think you would get bored at all in the end if you had someone to work with.

You need someone to work with?

Yes, I think you do. I think you need some personal relationship.

Now suppose that if we have students who want to work independently this way, that is they want to work on these programs, and we can't provide them with a teacher to work with them all the time (and that's true, we can't) in French I am talking about, do you think that two students working together might be an advantage?

I think that it would be good because if you have a problem then maybe one person can solve it and the other can't, and maybe vice versa on another problem. I think it helps to have someone else with you. It is more interesting.

Boyd, how do you feel about that. Do you think you would rather work on it absolutely alone, or do you think you would rather have a companion.

I sort of think it should be varied.

In other words, sometimes work alone, sometimes work with someone else.

Like somebody else could be working alone while you are, and maybe for a week or so at a time you could get together and see what the other one has accomplished and ask for problems.

Suppose now, Boyd, that you are on frame 650 and another student working on the same course is on frame 300. Do you still think that it would be of value to you to work with him somehow. Now you are way ahead of him, you see, and of course one of t capabilities of this program is that it permits you to work at your own speed, and if you can complete much, much more than would normally be done.

I can see your point, and I see what you mean, but if you wanted some personal pride in helping someone, maybe so. But I definitely can see your point.

Here is another thing that has occured to me several times. Suppose that we had a half dozen students working on the same program, each one at his own pace, and therefore at various points in the program. Like Ann Chasteen, for example, is going into the 7th unit and you are finishing the 3rd unit, and Randy is maybe at the beginning of the 6th unit, or something like that. So you are at really three different places. Can you imagine some kind of experience that we could set up for you so that the three of you (or however many of you there are) could get together and do something different in the program. Something else where Ann didn't have the advantage of having completed the material already, and you didn't have the disadvantage of not having seen it yet, as compared with the others. But all three of you would be given something all together new to work on together for a day or two, and then go back to your respective program. In other words something outside the program.

I think that would be interesting.

Can you imagine some activities that would be appropriate for this kind of work?

I think that movies.....

That of course is very possible. A good French movie that is simple enough for you to understand something. Or if you can't understand it, it is interesting to figure it out even though you can't understand the French too well.

Or maybe a French crossword puzzle.

Crossword puzzles in French--all sorts of games in French that the three of you could play tegether. Learning some songs in French.

French visitors.

You see, we have to think in terms of giving things to the students for them to do alone so that there doesn't have to be a teacher present--so that I don't have to be there on that occasion, or some French teacher doesn't have to come in on that occasion. Do you think the kids would work together on something if we just gave them an outline of an activity?

I think that considering the people that you picked this time, they had to be in the high ability, I think that they could do it because I think that the only ones who would fool around would be the ones that really didn't want to do it. And you didn't pick that kind of student.

This is what I'm thinking of. I would have a sheet of paper and I would call it French activity No. 1, or something like that, and it would be perhaps the listening to a 20-minute film in French. We would have to have a film projector, and we would hope that Randy would know how to use it--you know somebody has to turn it on and somebody has to turn it off and be sure it doesn't get broken. And the screen, of course, would have to be there. So the first thing in the activity would be that the three students of French will listen to the film and then afterwards the three French students will discuss the film, tell about what they recognized and make a list of all the things they recognized--if it were words, or if it were phrases, if there were things peculiar to French culture which are different from American culture. Anything which they noticed that they wouldn't notice if they weren't studying French. Make a list of such things and discuss them. Can you think of anything else that might enter into an activity like that?

I think that just discussion.

Well that might be good enough for one activity, because by the time that is done the period would probably be over anyway. But another activity might be French activity No. 2. Mr. So-and-so will come in this afternoon during the 8th period and the three French students will come there and be with him and he will talk to them in French on some of the subjects that are dealt with in the 3rd unit. He will try to limit himself to words which come up in the first, second and third units. Now that will help Ann, even though she is in the 6th unit, she will still be helped you see, and you are in the 3rd unit now so you will be helped.

I made a mistake. I'm in the end of the 4th unit.

OK. So what we would have to do then is let the gentleman know just how much French you have had, where you are in the program, so that when he comes in he tries to limit himself as much as he can to the amount of French that you have had--all of you up to that point. And then if he needs to explain in English he can do that and he can help you and encourage you to study, and give you an opportunity to say a few things to him. Mr. so-and-so would come in and there wouldn't be any teacher here. You would meet with him maybe in the office or the library and do this for the whole period and then at the end of the period he would go. This would be another activity. Or some French student from the University, or some AFS student from France from one of our high schools could come in and see you. Now these are the kinds of activities that we could set up for such a program as this if it were to go on for a year. Do you think it would be a good idea?

I believe that activities do encourage work.

You think that the kids would go for this?

Yes, definitely.

We have talked about boredom, and admit that there is a possibility of it, but that in the three months that you have been at it there really has not been. It hasn't been a serious matter, has it?
Your parents know that you are doing this, don't they?

Yes.

Did your parents get the letter that we sent out in March?

No.

But they understand the situation here?

Yes.

Have they said anything about it? What do they think of it? Do they think it is a good idea?

They like it. They think that it more or less encourages me to go on with it in high school.

How do they feel about your working on it independently without a teacher? Do they think there are a lot of dangers in this, or do they think that it is a good idea, given the fact that after all it is a program that has been designed for this kind of use.

They think, more or less, that it is a new experience for me.

Have they heard much about program learning and independent study?

I don't think so.

Interview with Robert and Carla

This is the last in I don't know how many interviews, and it seems like all the questions have been asked, and yet in your case I want to get you to comment on your attitude toward the program considering that when you started it so much of it was familiar to you. In fact, everything was familiar to you, and I don't believe at any point, even in the last few days, you have reached something that was completely unknown or unfamiliar to you, have you? (Addressed to Robert Davison.)
No.

All the way through it has been a language that you have been familiar with for as long as you can remember, and yet you have continued to come in and work on the program very conscientiously. Now why? What was the motivation?

I suppose it is because I am learning something new, as in conjugating verbs and things like that. I guess that did it. Now most kids, you know, would think, "Now, boy, that's a lot of work conjugating verbs." And, "That sounds tough. I wouldn't do that in a million years." Yet, I have had so much of the conversatio nal stuff that I want to learn something more about it. This program teaches what I want to know.

Now let's go back to this point. The Spanish language is important to you, right?

Yes.

You don't have any desire to forget your Spanish?

No.

You want to improve your knowledge of the Spanish language.

Yes.

Any kind of a program, any kind of a program, any kind of a means that will help you improve your knowledge of Spanish is something that you would be willing to work at.

Right.

And the time was provided for you to do this the last three months with this program and you did it.

Right.

Was there anything about the program that was somewhat disappointing. Would you have liked to have gotten a different kind of a program perhaps?

Yes, I guess so.

How about a Spanish reading program of some sort for someone in your position, instead of going through the structure so carefully?

I think this is fine--the way we are doing it now. What we had in grade school, they give you a book, you'reassigned to read it, and you read it. You've got to

read it or they say you have to do a book report or you have to do this or that. Well, sure that's fine, to a certain point, but I think in Spanish you ought to have it like this--not have anything too required. Like every now and then a teacher could come in and say next week you can draw up maybe a paragraph or two, not a big 400 page report or something. But do some small task. Or if the teacher could bring in movies or something like that that would help us.

Of course we thought in terms of having somebody come in occasionally. It would have to be every week or every two weeks, and arrange for a program or arrange for a contact with you that would be somewhat different from this perhaps, and yet the person would be in a position to answer some questions that you might have about difficulties that arose in the program. Do you think that most kids in the 7th and 8th grades could profit from this kind of an approach to a language, or do you think that only a small number of youngsters would really be interested in tackling something like this?

It depends. You have got to have special kids. You can't have kids that will come in and bum around. I mean this is for kids with.....

A purpose?

Yes. A high intellect, or something like that, that know what they are going to do. You are on your own and you have got to do it or it is an entire waste of time if you are not going to work at it.

How do you account for the difference in people? Like the situation that I was asked to look at the other day? In one of our high schools the first year Spanish teachers have lumped their students together for part of the time, and they teach them as a team. So they will be, all 75, 95, or 100, whatever there are in that period, in a big room, and they will do certain things there--teaching dialogues, structure, or something like that. Then they will break up into smaller groups and go with their teacher, and if they have practice teachers working with them, which they have had this year, they might even be able to arrange for some smaller groups. But what this arrangement has made possible is a division of groups by abilities, and by the way they seem to be learning. You go into the one classroom and there will be 35 kids who have been subjected to this Spanish team out there in that high school, and they haven't remembered to bring a pencil; and they have to have paper passed out to them; and they can't remember what they were supposed to do for the day although what they were supposed to do is prepare for a dictation exercise in the dialogue that they have been working on, and their ability to do this successfully will make the difference between success and failure in some instances. But, nevertheless, a large percentage of this group doesn't seem to be aware of this and some of them are sitting there with a faraway look in their eyes, and some of them are talking to one another, socializing. They don't seem to know where they are. And then you go down the hall to another class of first year Spanish students that has been with this group in the team and they are alert. They are sitting there looking at one fellow who is sitting across from the teacher and he is telling about his plans for the summer in Spanish. And when he gets done the kids ask him questions, the teacher asks him questions, and so forth. He is doing this without any reference to any written material. When he gets done he gets up and somebody else comes up and sits down and does the very same thing. You don't even know they are doing the same thing.

They are supposed to be learning the same subject. What makes the kids in the one class so alert and so alive and so purposeful; and the kids in the other class so lethargic and so uncaring about what they are doing? What do you think?

Probably student participation for one count. You can get up in group participation where everybody listens to you. And I suppose--would it have anything to do with numbers?

There are the same number of kids in each class. They have been divided. The kids who are more active and alert have been put into this one group even though it may have started out with the other teacher. They are shifted around until they are more homogenous than they were at the beginning, so that you get all the dead-heads over here in the one class, and all the live-wires over here in the other class. But they do get taught together for certain things; then they separate, you see, and the one group because they are all live-wires are able to go so much further ahead in Spanish than the other group. So I was wondering, is it just a matter of intelligence? Do you think that is it entirely?

Well I suppose so, maybe. It has something to do with how they are pushed at it. What makes them do it. What have they got coming out of it. If they get out of it what they put into it....If they get anything out of it. That's what they want.

In other words, if they really are successful and they get enjoyment out of it, they feel it is worthwhile. They will go ahead and make progress. If they are not getting anything out of it on a day-to-day basis, if they are not enjoying it, if they are not meeting with success, it doesn't mean anything to them and they quit working. Now do you think a program like this has kind of a built-in prod that keeps you going because of the process, and because of the format; or do you think you could give this to some kids and they would just turn the thing off, or they would let it run and then just sit there with a blank faraway look in their eyes. Now you see what I'm driving at--now you could do that. A kid could come in here, turn this thing on and just put his head back, open his mouth, and let it run, and that would be like being in a class with a teacher who is trying to teach you something.....

The teacher would scream at you.

Well the teacher would scream at you, but sometimes that doesn't do any good. Now would a kid do that? Would a kid take the time to check out a tape recorder, bring it in here, plug it in, put the tape on, start the tape up, and sit here and just go to sleep? Would he be liable to do this?

Well, I know of one kid who would. But I think most normal kids wouldn't.

If they really didn't want to participate they would turn it off, or they wouldn't check out the tape recorder in the first place.

They wouldn't come. They would just walk around the halls or something.

What I am trying to determine in my own mind is whether most kids would be motivated to continue doing this because there is a certain pride you take in studying out with something and keeping it up.

I think the thing with this is that you can tell everybody that you are learning by yourself, and that this is all done by yourself, and it is almost like no outside help at all. You are learning this language by yourself.

You know you can be anonymous in a classroom of 35 kids, and you don't have to feel guilty about it, and you don't have to feel ashamed. But let's say that everybody knows that you are supposed to be studying Spanish by independent study. So you never check out a tape recorder, or you sit here and go to sleep. You certainly couldn't take any pride in what you are doing. Nor can you hide behind a mask of anonymity.

Right.

Well thanks a lot. I am glad we got something recorded here. I wish it had been longer and that we would have been able to say more, but that's the way it goes. Thanks a lot kids.